

Council on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing

MINUTES

JUNE 15, 2012 10:00AM – 4:00PM

1 WEST WILSON, MADISON

MEETING CALLED BY	Billy Mauldin
PRESENT	Tom Benziger, Tami Klink, Billy Mauldin, Steve Smart, Justin Dean Vollmar
ODHH STAFF PRESENT	Linda Huffer, Melani Kaplan
ABSENT	Mary Jane Griffin
INTERPRETERS	Stephanie Kerkvliet, Amber Mullett
OBSERVERS	Gary Ebben

Meeting called to order at 10:08am by Billy Mauldin, Chair.

No quorum possible with open Council positions and absent members.

Agenda topics

INTRODUCTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS AND ODHH STAFF

DISCUSSION	** Due to new Council members and new ODHH staff members, introductions were necessary.
Melani Kaplan – Human Services Program Coordinator, new ODHH staff member starting in March, 2012.	
Tom Benziger – New Council member; recently relocated from Illinois where he served four terms on the Governor’s Council for Illinois; works for Access Living in Illinois. (In response to question put forth by Billy.) Wanted to join the Council after seeing the differences in available services between Illinois and Wisconsin. Would like to broaden scope of Council’s focus to tackle a variety of issues from mental health services, education, interpreting issues, senior citizens, and issues impacting people who are Deaf-Blind.	
Linda Huffer – Director of ODHH	
Billy Mauldin – Council Chair; member of Council since 2002; used to run the Wisconsin Telecommunications System until the contract expired; works for ZVRS and is responsible for accounts in all 50 states, including the federal government.	
Gary Ebben – Observer, interested in applying for vacant position on the Council; retired from Trade Association Management business; lost hearing later in life; found out about Council and ODHH from talking with Tami Klink’s son.	
Tami Klink – Council member; owns a market research company; columnist for the Journal Sentinel Group on hearing loss; founder of HLAA chapter in Wales, WI.	
Justin Dean Vollmar – New Council member; substitute teacher at Wisconsin School for the Deaf (WSD); pastor of Virtual Deaf Church for the Deaf with an average of 2,500 viewers a week; former teacher/registrar at bible college for the deaf in Maryland.	

Steve Smart – New Council member; sign language interpreter and owner of Professional Interpreting Enterprise (PIE); teach a class at University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (UWM) in the Interpreting Training Program (ITP); has various roles throughout the state as consultant and board member.

Amber Mullett – (in response to prompting from Billy to step out of her role as meeting interpreter) Staff Interpreter for ODHH for five years; position includes not just interpreting, but also supports other ODHH staff on projects and programs.

COUNCIL UPDATES, OPEN COUNCIL POSITIONS, REVIEW OF BYLAWS

DISCUSSION

Open Council Positions – The Council’s Bylaws provide for three Deaf members, three Hard of Hearing members, one Deaf-Blind member, and two At Large members. There are currently three vacant positions on the Council; one Hard of Hearing position, the Deaf-Blind position, and one Member At Large position. Melani sent notice of the position vacancy to the Center for the Deaf-Blind Persons in Milwaukee and asked Council members to assist in recruiting new members. The Governor’s office does not have any new applications for members on file. It is important for interested persons to submit their application to the Governor and not to Linda (as she doesn’t make the appointments). The Governor’s office will try to get members on the Council as soon as the applications arrive in the office. One issue can be that ODHH does not know when applications are submitted to the Governor’s office. Tami is willing to work with her contact in the Governor’s office to help expedite appointments once the applications are received in their office.

New Member Terms – New member terms are clarified as they are filling positions that were left by prior members who served less than the full four-year term. Once the remaining term is completed, members can re-apply for a full four-year term and can serve up to two consecutive four-year terms.

Review of ByLaws – Upon review of the Bylaws, Tom found some areas for improvement:

- Noted that the meeting for 6/15/2012 was planned so quickly that the required public notification of three weeks prior to the meeting was not met.
- Council needs to clarify where the public notifications for upcoming meetings should be posted. A few suggested sites include schools for the Deaf, other sites for which people who are Deaf look for scheduled activities, and interpreting agencies.
- Special care regarding notifications should be considered when reaching out to the Deaf-Blind Community and providing the announcements in a manner that accommodates for individual needs.
- Suggests the Council consider planning a retreat during which issues can be thoroughly discussed and a three or five-year plan is created.

Council members will submit suggestions for locations for notifications of meetings and other Council announcements to Melani at a later date.

Quorum – Will submit a vote to change the Bylaws regarding the number of members required to establish a quorum.

May also discuss possibility of changing the Bylaws regarding the meeting schedule. Next meeting tentatively scheduled for September 13th.

Council Updates –

On reaching out to members of the Deaf-Blind community; it is suggested the Council members look for opportunities to attend events for people who are Deaf-Blind to gather their perspectives on needs and issues that the Council should address.

The website will be updated and revised to make it more accessible to all language needs. The information will be updated. Signing and vlogs will be added. Justin will work with Melani on the ASL video portions of the website.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Submit suggestions of locations for notifications and announcements to Melani at ODHH.	All Council Members	August 1
Compile complete list of locations for notifications and announcements	Melani	September 1
Work together on ASL videos for the Council and ODHH websites	Melani and Justin	September 1 st and ongoing
A vote to change the Bylaws to better allow for a quorum will be submitted to sitting Council members via email, prior to next meeting.	Billy	July 16

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DISCUSSION	
<p>New staff includes Melani Kaplan, Human Services Program Coordinator, and Nancy Harbison, Regional Coordinator for the Green Bay/Appleton/Fox Valley area. Interviews are still taking place for the Regional Coordinator position for the Wausau/Stevens Point area.</p> <p>WITA testing has been briefly and temporarily suspended during the summer to revise and improve the process for all involved. It will be back up and running in time for the next testing period in October. A letter was sent out announcing this and can be viewed online at ODHH's website in ASL.</p> <p>ODHH staff members are working on a wide variety of projects in a wide variety of areas. They include: Mental Health, Birth-to-Three, ADA-related issues, ODHHNet, Department of Corrections, HIV & AIDS, housing, grants writing, Disaster Preparedness, and other issues as needed.</p>	

OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION	
Brief update on HLAA.	
<p>Disaster Preparedness – Melani will follow up with Susan Burleigh at the Office of Emergency Management to see if she included the materials the Council sent to her, in March of 2011, in with their 2011 brochures, pamphlets, and website. First responders do not seem to be taking advantage of the free training provided by</p>	

ODHH on how to work with people with a hearing loss. Other possible ways of reaching out to them may include hosting a state-wide summit, staging a disaster reenactment utilizing mock victims who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, reaching out to provide trainings to students studying to become a first responder (EMT, Police, Firefighter, etc.), working with Tech Colleges to host a Disaster Preparedness Day, or searching for grant funding to create a program that contracts with people who have a hearing loss to run trainings for other people with hearing loss on how to prepare for disasters. Tami and Melani will collaborate to identify some key people in the First Responder field in the state to approach as possible allies to establish better training opportunities. Another consideration in this arena is to work with the Deaf community who use Video Phones via the internet on how to call 911 as address information is not readily available the way it is if the call originated via a landline phone.

Mental Health Summit – A Mental Health Summit was held in Pewaukee on March 13, 2012. Discussed the current need for services and gaps in existing system. Attended by professionals in field of Mental Health and members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. Summit aimed to raise awareness of the problems and concerns with mental health for people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind in the state of Wisconsin. The response was overwhelmingly receptive. The Steering Committee is now splitting into Workgroups to tackle key components and is applying for monies from a Block Grant to support their next steps. Education is needed for hearing professionals on how to work with interpreters who have gone through the additional training for mental health settings and the consumers who need their services. Training is also needed for the communities on mental health issues.

ACTION ITEMS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Follow up with Susan Burleigh and the Office of Emergency Management and update Council	Melani	August 1
Compile list of possible partners for training opportunities with First Responders	Melani & Tami	TBD

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION	Issues were discussed, but none selected due to the lack of a quorum. This is an overview for Council members to consider as they plan their next steps.
Late Deafened Issues - Council should keep in mind how to reach out to and consider issues relating to people who have lost hearing later in life – including returning Veterans who have lost hearing. There is concern relating to lack of support or follow-up after receiving hearing aids on how to use them, tips and techniques for living with hearing aids and hearing loss, etc.	
Mental Health Steering Committee – Post-Summit, the Committee has identified the top five issues to address and split into work groups. The issues are: Information/Training/Creating Tool Kits, Licensing, Tele-Counseling, Financial Resources, getting persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing on key Boards related to Mental Health, and Communication & Technology.	

Deaf Awareness Fest – ODHH is co-hosting the Deaf Awareness Fest with Wisconsin Association of the Deaf (WAD) on Saturday, September 29th, at MATC in Oak Creek. Members of the ODHH staff will be on hand and Council members are invited to attend as well. All are encouraged to invite people who are hearing to attend and learn about Deaf Culture.

Insurance Coverage for Hearing Aids – Legislature has successfully been passed for insurance companies to cover hearing aids for children under the age of eighteen. However, the high cost of hearing aids remains an issue for many adults who need them, particularly those on a fixed income.

Website – The ODHH website needs to be revamped to be more accessible to sign language users and expanded to include more resources and information. Council members are asked to forward any ideas or possible resources to include in the website to Melani. Justin and Melani will work together on creating videos in ASL for the site.

Communication Access Fund (CAF) – In the twenty-plus years since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed into law, people who need interpreter or CART services still face resistance and barriers on a daily basis. The Communication Access Fund is an idea formulated by Howard Rosenblum, the CEO of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), as a way to remove the constant struggle for equal access in this area of need. Professionals who must pay for a license in order to work in the state would be charged an extra fee as part of the licensing fee. This portion of the fee is pooled to create a Communication Access Fund (CAF) that serves as insurance for the professionals in the event that they must provide accommodations in the means of a Sign Language Interpreter, an Oral Interpreter, a Captionist, or Assistive Listening Device. The service provider would be paid for by the CAF, thus spreading the costs for equal access among all the professionals who are using the accommodation service in that field.

AA/NA Equal Access – There is an issue in the community to receive interpreting services for AA/NA meetings. Because these groups are self-sustaining and exist solely on member contributions, they do not have funds to pay for interpreter services. They also, as part of their charter, cannot solicit outside support. Thus, there is a dearth of accessible meetings. This is a complex issue that may require several approaches to fill the gaps. There are online AA/NA meetings for signers. Support may need to be provided to those who need computer access to connect to these meetings. A state-wide volunteer interpreting program may be another way to provide services. Denise Johnson from Independence First, and ILCs could be possible sources of other solutions. Illinois has a fairly good program for accessible meetings that resulted from a lawsuit.

Deaf/Blind Interpreting & Support Service Providers (SSP) Training – Persons who are Deaf-Blind may experience difficulty finding interpreters, especially in times of urgent need, due to insufficient interpreters who are trained to work with them. Ideas need to be explored on how to improve available training for interpreters in the state of Wisconsin on how to work with people who have a hearing loss and vision impairment. Possible partners in this issue could be WisRID, the Center for Deaf-Blind Persons, and the Helen Keller Institute. Training could be encouraged during the annual WisRID fall conference or during the year as a

separate event. Another need is for Support Service Providers. The state used to have this kind of program, but has not had it for a while. There currently is no means of getting financial support for this, but the need is still there.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION

DISCUSSION

Issues introduced for Council members to consider as they plan their next steps.

Interpreting in Courts and Legal Setting Issues – Submitted to the Council for more research on the issue of interpreters in the legal process. Interpreters often see barriers that are not apparent to hearing people who are not familiar with issues related to Deaf people and their communication needs.

Deaf Child's Bill of Rights – Submitted to the Council for possible support in establishing a Deaf Child's Bill of Rights that would empower parents the freedom to decide what works best for the individual child regarding communication and assistive equipment.

Sign Language Classes – Submitted to the Council for more research on improving the prevalence of sign language classes and support for families looking to learn in order to better communicate with a child or family member. Deaf Mentor Project helps families with young children up to a certain age. After that, resources dwindle for families looking to learn sign language and can be difficult to find.

Meeting adjourned at 3:17pm by Billy Mauldin, Chair.